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R. W. Milligan

LUKE:

THE
PERSONALITY
AND
VERSATILITY
OF HIS GENIUS

By

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Mr. Caswell A. Mayo,
with Compliments of the Author.
LUKE:

THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN

Some Thoughts Pertaining to the
Versatility of Attainments and
Marvellous Genius of
the Man.

BY J. C. CULBERTSON, M.D.

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LUKE.

THE ordinary significance and understanding of the term "reporter" appertains to one who makes a record of current events, of which he is an eye-witness, or who takes down the direct testimony of others.

The value of such a record depends upon the reputation for veracity and moral character of the man who does the writing, as well as upon his skill in chirography. The value of a reporter's record is also determined by its fullness and exact delineation of the subject-matter recorded. There must be no exaggeration or undue coloring, nor should there be omissions or neglect of statement. Every line must be as true a reflection of the transaction recorded as though it were imaged from the finest plate mirror.

Exactness as of the image in the mirror is what gives special value to stenographers' notes. Every line and every dot has its significance in fidelity to fact.

Circumstances not infrequently make of the reporter a world's historian, or to a reporter's records the historian is indebted for the material from which to frame the world's histories.

It is our purpose to direct attention to a display of skillful reporting that has never been surpassed by a rival in any age.

The reporter to whom we refer, fortunately, lived in the most eventful period of the world's history—*i.e.*, in the first century of the Christian era. The place of his birth was the city of Antioch, in Syria, and he a member of a distinguished Gentile family, that was proud of an escutcheon which denoted their rightful claim to be free citizens of Rome. His education was perfected by the most careful Greek, Roman and Hebrew teachers of that period. Nature's lavish

gifts of grace and intellect were thoroughly cultivated.

The name Luke indicates a Roman origin, while his versatility and beauty of expression in the Greek language will for all time command the profound admiration of classical scholars.

That Luke was not a Jew was indicated by St. Paul when, in his letter to the Colossians, he sent to them the salutations of Aristarchus, Marcus and Justus, adding, "they were of the circumcision" Hebrews, and immediately, in a succeeding verse, tells them: "Luke and Demas greet you"—phrasing his letter in this way evidently with the intention of drawing a line of distinction between those who were Jews and those who were Gentiles.

We will always think of him as having a gentle and sympathetic disposition, alert and quick to observe, with a passionate longing for a knowledge of the uncertain and hidden things in nature, which impelled

him to take advantage of every possible opportunity for research and investigation. With a highly developed poetic temperament, his language has a rhythm and pathos, a fervor, dramatic tone and touch, that captivates and entrances the reader of every period of life, from infancy to old age. Nor were his gifts of genius limited to the use of his pen ; for he was undoubtedly the finest artist of his day, being a skillful master with pencil and brush, color and canvas. Though famous in the use of these materials, his word-painting has a touch never before or since attained by mortal man. His description of the angels' appearance to the shepherds has furnished a theme for the world's greatest poets, painters and engravers. The word-painting of the parable of the prodigal son stands out in bold relief by the side of any other story that ever was penned. The song of Mary, as she sang in the Magnificat, was never surpassed in melody and poetry by King David, whom

we are pleased to think of as Israel's greatest musician and poet; by Handel, Hayden or Milton.

With such rich endowments from the store-house of genius; with such surroundings and tastes, his inclination for study and work easily led him to look with favor upon the healing art as a profession and life work. The life of a physician accorded with his humane sympathies, scholastic attainments and ambitious purposes.

For the prosecution of his professional studies there is a doubt as to whether he matriculated in the famous school on the Island of Cos, or studied under a preceptor in Tarsus. Whichever the place, it is known that he became an expert clinician. As an every-day observer of cases, in their diagnosis, treatment, pathology and prognosis, his professional skill was not surpassed.

While engaged in his daily vocation of waiting on the sick, filled with the ardor of youth, he was absorbed with interest and

enthusiasm in his professional work, and perhaps engaged in that highest type of a physician's labor—the making of original researches, delving after the unknown—when heralds and messengers startled him with tidings of a great physician in the Galilee country, who was going about preaching a new religious doctrine and healing those who were suffering from malignant and other incurable diseases. Even loathsome lepers and palsied men were at His touch restored to health and happiness. Epileptics ceased to have fits, and the insane maniacs were restored to their right minds. The blind were made to see, and the deaf to hear. This new physician was evidently learned in a new school, and possessed the divine power of being able to suspend the known laws of nature.

Nor need surprise be expressed that such messages startled the beloved disciple of the healing art. Such manifestations of skill

in his profession had never before been attained by any physician. Hippocrates, that grand old father of medicine and prince of observers, has left no record of cures such as were narrated of the Galileean.

After the manner of many of the brightest young men of the present day, who leave schools and homes to learn of the sages and walk the hospital wards of older countries than ours, this young physician, with case-book, ink-horn and stylus in hand, set out at once for the scene of the labors of the wisest physician that ever directed a potion or dictated a prescription.

Arrived in Galilee, and within sound of the great physician's voice, his instincts and intuitions led him to inquire as to who this man was, and of his personal history. He listened with awe to the story of the expected Messiah, and that this healer was a lineal descendant of King David. He was told of the singular birth; of the visit of the wise men from the East; of how they

followed a peculiar star until it stood over Bethlehem, the city of David. He was told of the gifts brought by those rich Persians, and of their placing them in the lap of the mother of a babe, to which she had just given birth while being confined in a manger of a stable, because there was no room for her in the inn. The young physician was told of the shepherds tending their flocks, and listening to the song of the angels heralding the proclamation of peace on earth and good will to men.

To say Dr. Luke was profoundly impressed with all that was told him is readily believed. His search for knowledge enabled him to gather all the biographical particulars pertaining to this physician who was beginning to attract the attention of the Syrian people. This information was carefully recorded in his note-book, so that in after years, when inspired by a divine will to write a Gospel, his data for reference were found in his invaluable notes.

An evidence of his logical and legal knowledge of the difference between hearsay and direct testimony is amply illustrated in the very first verses of the first chapter in his Gospel, where he says :

“Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding from the first.”

From which he goes on to tell of the joy and gladness that came into the world with the birth of this now famous physician, of whom he became a personal follower almost from the very beginning of his professional career.

The personal friendship of Luke with Mary, the mother of Jesus, enabled him to give us a glimpse at the boy-life of the Master. This intimacy, coupled with his professional character as a physician, en-

abled him to draw from her the particulars of the miraculous conception, as well as the singular circumstances surrounding and connected with the Messiah's birth. Luke's narrative tells a mother's story. A womanly woman would not—could not—tell that story to any other than her confidential physician, nor could another person fully appreciate the details of such an event. Think for a moment of the utter impossibility of a mother telling of those occurrences to a rude fisherman, or to a tax-gatherer! Her nature would revolt and compel her to shrink from the ordeal, but to Luke—he was her doctor. He knew of the distress and maternal agony that she had suffered; she knew of his exceeding gentleness and sympathetic nature. She would and did tell him the whole story.

The narrative given by Matthew is a legal record of evidence given him by men.

Our Savior's first miracles are not recorded by Luke, because they were per-

formed before his arrival from Antioch; but speedily he begins to record the fact of many who were sick being healed of their diseases, particularly telling of Peter's mother-in-law, who was sick of a fever. We are quite ready to believe that this woman was dangerously, if not, to all appearances, fatally ill, and her condition was certainly regarded as hopeless by her friends and her attending physician; because, in no other instance is there a special mention in any of the Gospels of cases cured by Jesus which did not belong to the incurable class of diseases. Such were the lepers, the insane, the paralytics, the epileptics, the blind and deaf. Luke alone tells us of the raising from the dead of the son of the widow of Nain. He also records the raising from the dead of Jairus' daughter, and in graphic language narrates the occurrence of the transfiguration.

The occurrences in the life of our Lord as found in Luke's Gospel from the ninth

chapter and fifty-third verse to the eighteenth chapter and ninth verse, are not elsewhere recorded. This includes the mission of the seventy, which has been a loving theme of inspiration to the Christian Church from that day to this; the touching parable of the good Samaritan, wherein is taught the beauty of mercy and the brotherhood of man. Luke then tells of the affectionate visit of our Lord to his devoted friends Martha and Mary.

No less than sixteen of our Lord's parables are alone told by Luke. And while we recognize the fact that these sixteen parables represent that number of our Savior's sermons, their preservation for our use, in such terse and graphic language, calls for not only a reverence for the greatest of preachers, but for an admiration of the remarkable diction of the reporter. There is never a word left out, or an interpolation of a single unnecessary syllable.

Luke tells of the parable of the Pharisee

and the publican at prayer in the temple. Was ever so much told in such few words?

Again, Luke is the only evangelist who reports the parable of the prodigal son. Not forgetting the author and divine preacher, we must be allowed to express our admiration of the beautiful but terse language used in making the record by the inspired reporter. The genius of Milton and Shakespeare pales before the dramatic presentation of this matchless story. Never before or since has there been so much skill displayed in the shifting of scenes. The word-painting is the most brilliant masterpiece in any language, or ever objectively transferred to any canvas. And yet the entire story is told in twenty-two short verses, which may be easily read in two or three minutes. The whole story is told without the omission of a single link or word. Was there ever such imagery? The soul-thoughts of the dramatic poet, the scenic artist, the scientific psychologist, are coördinated and

blended by Divinity, and written down by a beloved physician who was an inspired reporter.

We pass on to the conspiracy against the Messiah, which is recorded by Luke. The agony in the garden is portrayed by this evangelist in the most feeling manner; and then he briefly tells of how the great Physician took time in the midst of His own troubles to heal the ear of the servant of the high priest, that had been cut off by the impetuous Peter. This miracle is not recorded by the other evangelists. The cruel treatment and physical exposure of the Master at this time produced great prostration. His exhaustion and continued suffering, as depicted by Luke, as well as by the other evangelists, were sufficient to overcome his physical strength to such a degree as to cause him to sink under the weight of the cross. The crucifixion, burial, resurrection and ascension are reverently mentioned by Luke in the most impressive language.

We now come to the second book written by our inspired reporter,

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES,

which can and should be read as a natural continuation of the third Gospel.

The first verse of the Acts indicates that this treatise was confided to Theophilus, and then immediately the writer proceeds to tell of Jesus, his resurrection, passion and ascension, and to prophesy that "this same Jesus which was taken up into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as he was seen go into Heaven."

Luke tells of the selection of Matthias to take the place of Judas, who had committed suicide, and of that wonderful prayer-meeting wherein the disciples continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, which was a practical preparation for the coming day of Pentecost, when Peter preached his great sermon, which Luke recorded for our edification. The inspired

reporter also tells, in his own graphic language, of the descent of the Holy Spirit. There were many things happened that day to entice a reporter to tell a more sensational story than that recorded by Luke, but we may rest assured he has told enough, or more would be there.

The lame man at the beautiful gate was miraculously healed by Peter, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Luke tells all about this occurrence, as he had a professional interest in the case. The imprisonment of Peter and John next claims his and our attention, for we observe in the narrative that Luke had not yet severed his relations with the apostles, which for three years had been very intimate. Particularly does he cling to Peter, who, he says, healed every one of the sick folks brought to him.

Our historian tells of the selection of deacons, Stephen being the first, and who, being accused by false witnesses, at once delivered an oration in his own defense,

the subject-matter of which indicates him to have been a man of superior learning and ability. Those who listened (and among them was Saul) were cut to the heart; they were mad. In reading the lines of the narrator, we can see with our minds, as in a mirror, the figure of this grand, good man looking up into the heavens, and fairly getting a vision of the glory of the Majesty on high and Jesus standing on the right hand of the Almighty, of which he testified. This was too much for the incensed and turbulent mob to bear, so they cast him out of the city and stoned him to death. Saul took care of the superfluous clothes of the chief actors in this infamous murder. Luke was there, and forever the Christian world should remember him for the record he has given of the first martyr, whose blood has been literally the seed of the church. Luke kept back nothing that was necessary for us to know, for he is very particular in telling

that Saul consented to Stephen's death; and that consent meant a strong arm, and a wide-awake, influential attorney as a defender of the infamy of his assailants.

Stephen was buried by devout men, but Saul behaved as one filled with a Satanic spirit, stopping at no excess. He made havoc of the church, entering into every house, where he accosted, charged and accused men and women so as to have an excuse to commit them to prison. The acts of Saul were those of a veritable demon let loose.

With the pen of a master, the narrator shifts the scenes, and we are made to see Philip on his way to Samaria, where the people gave heed to his preaching and where he performed many miraculous cures. Luke, true to his professional instincts, mentions only those suffering from incurable diseases—the insane, the palsied and the crippled. Luke accompanied Philip to Jerusalem, and witnessed the conversion

and baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch ; from thence they went to Azolus, and passing through, says Philip preached in all the cities till they came to Cesarea.

Luke seems in all this time to have kept a watchful eye on Saul, for he right away after this, says, Saul was yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. When we think of the wonderful power of this man as an orator, whose command of invective language has never been surpassed, or even approached, we may faintly realize his dominion over the people, and the influence exerted by his breathings of threat, prison and slaughter. So infatuated was he in his persecutions of the Christians, who were as yet insignificant in numbers, and utterly without official or government power, that he determined to crush them out of existence. That he might be able to legally defend his course of conduct, Saul went to the high priest and asked for letters to the rulers of the

synagogues in Damascus, authorizing him to arrest and bring in bonds to Jerusalem all professors of the new religion.

This was a famous journey, and Luke tells of it in the graphic language of a keen observer who was present. How, on the way, this man, who was literally a Satanic terror, was himself arrested by Jehovah and placed in bonds, which made him so utterly helpless that he sank to the ground. How futile the strength of the stalwart attorney when in the hands of the Lord!

The question has no doubt been frequently asked why Luke was not himself made a victim of Saul's persecutions. One reason was, because the inspired reporter was known to be, like Saul himself, a free Roman citizen, and also a Gentile, whose family connections in Rome and Antioch would make the situation serious if any bodily harm came to one of their number, of whom they were justly proud because of his distinguished culture and attainments.

Another reason was because Saul knew Luke to be a skillful physician, and, like himself, an eminent scholar, while it is more than probable they had had the same teachers, and may have been intimate classmates in Tarsus. No matter how wicked and vicious men may be, in all ages they have shown a profound respect for the physician who binds up their bruises, sets their broken bones and heals them of their diseases. Physicians on their professional rounds through the slums, gamblers' dens and dangerous places in the city or on the frontier are personally safe, if their profession is known and they attend only to their errands of mercy. The church has recently learned this fact, and now sends to the front in heathen lands her consecrated physicians.

In graphic language and with a beauty of diction that makes us lose sight of the writer, the inspired reporter tells us the particulars of Saul's conversion and his becoming a chosen vessel to bear the name

of the Lord before the Gentiles, and Kings as well as the children of Israel. True to his nature, he did not rest a moment, but straightway preached Christ in the synagogues, claiming he was the Son of God. Need surprise be expressed that the reporter says: "All that heard him were amazed?" In turn the other Jews took counsel to kill him, but the disciples took care of him, and when in personal danger let him down on the outside of the wall of the city in a basket, whence he proceeded to Jerusalem, where he attempted to join himself to the disciples, but they were afraid of him, thinking it a subterfuge on his part to get the better of them, they not having heard of his remarkable conversion; but Barnabas came along and told the apostles of his change of heart and how it was brought about. For a little time the Greeks tried to slay him, but without a leader this feeling of hatred subsided, and, for the first time in their history, the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee and

Samaria had rest, were edified and multiplied.

We always admire the exquisitely artistic manner in which the inspired reporter completes a theme or dovetails one subject into another—as when he leaves the churches in a condition of rest to accompany Peter to Lydda, where they found a man named Æneas, who had been bed-ridden for eight years with palsy, and who was cured by Peter in the name of Jesus Christ. Going to Joppa, they found one of the good women named Tabitha had become sick and died. Through Peter's prayer she was restored to life.

Attention is again directed to the fact that, although many cures of sick folks took place, only those are recorded by Luke which were regarded as, humanly speaking, incurable, and among which may be classed the restoration of the dead to life.

Luke went with Peter to Cesarea and recorded the story of the latter's sermon to

Cornelius and his company, then of Peter's vision of the sheet let down from heaven, after which he tells us of Barnabas seeking Saul at Tarsus and their going to Antioch, where the disciples were first called Christians. We cannot refrain from expressing a thought of the joy and gladness that must have thrilled the heart of Luke at having Paul and Barnabas with him in the home of his parents and friends, and with what delight he tells the world that it was in Antioch that the followers of Jesus were first called Christians.

The persecution by Herod and his miserable death by gangrene, for he was eaten of worms before he gave up the ghost, after which Saul's name was changed to Paul, who then began his wonderful missionary tours, being accompanied first by Barnabas and then by Mark, but always by Luke, who is on all occasions the inspired historian. While he tells of Paul's sermons, and where they preached the gospel, he seems never to

omit the miraculous cures, as where he tells of the man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb,—a case of congenital talipes,—who had never stood alone, and because of his faith was cured by Paul, so that he leaped and walked. What an admirable court reporter Luke would have made!

From this time on Luke stays steadfastly with Paul, reporting his sermons and keeping a diary of all the principal events that transpired. This diary is unlike that ever kept by any other individual. The writer never once refers to himself, but in the most graphic language portrays a list of occurrences which we read over and over, again and again, and never tire of his descriptions.

Eagerly we scan Paul's defense and statement of how he was converted, and who ever thought of weariness in reading of Paul's oration before Festus and his appeal to Cæsar, or who has not been entranced

over his defense before Agrippa? Such oratory and such preaching have never been surpassed. While we are enraptured with the impassioned speaker, let us not forget to give due credit to the modest but scholarly physician who was inspired to write the record.

The shipwreck! As we read of it we see every rope, spar, anchor, chain and rudder band, the waves, cries for aid and the saving of the 276 souls; the barbarous people who were kind; the fire made with sticks by Paul, and the venomous snake that bit him; the curing of the father of the chief man on the island, who was sick of a fever and of a bloody flux, a disease almost surely fatal in that country; the return to Rome by way of Appii Forum and the three taverns, which, when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage. Arriving in Rome, Luke says, Paul was released, and remained there for two whole years, preaching the kingdom of God and teach-

ing those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him. To a great extent it was the labors of Paul at this time that constituted and founded the church at Rome.

This brings us to the end of a brief review of the narrative of a writer whose elegance of diction, whose graphic but never exaggerated portrayal of scenes and occasions, whose delineations of character, records of sermons and orations have never been equalled; whose manifest skill and interest in his profession of medicine is shown in frequent reports of important cases, with never a reference to one that might be called ordinary, or as being of those curable by other known remedies than were reported as used in each instance, for space and time are not given up for a record of ordinary curable affections, which must have been numerous; whose poetic and musical ability bubbles forth in his rendition of Mary's song magnifying the Lord, while a tradi-

tion wholly unauthenticated comes rippling down the centuries, telling of Luke's skill as an artist, and of his painting a portrait of the Virgin Mary, of which the many prints seen in shop windows and in the homes of Catholic families are copies. We have often observed the similarity of expression found in the poorest and the best of these pictures, and there certainly is reason to believe them to have a common origin, and the original to have come from the hand and easel of the inspired physician, who was so skilled in word-painting and reporting.

In like manner we have noted the benign face of our divine Savior as imaged on thousands of prints produced by hundreds of artists, good and bad in workmanship, many dissimilar, but all alike and true in expression, and evidently re-copies from one original, the painter of which, we may safely infer, could have been none other than he of whom we naturally think—the

modest, unassuming, beloved physician, who, while portraying the work, the life and character of others, never once in all his writings mentions or refers to his own participation in the exciting events of which he makes a historical record. The culture, refinement and scholarship of Luke the physician made him the loving companion, first, of the stern and impetuous Peter, and then of the strong-minded theologian, orator and lawyer, St. Paul. Luke was a rare man, remarkable for the versatility of his marvellous genius, and singularly free from selfishness and ostentation. We may truly say, he never had a double.

